



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Letter from Archbishop Denis Hart to the Ukrainian People 29 January, 2014

We, the Catholic Bishops, and the whole Catholic Church in Australia, greet all Ukrainians in Australia and indeed in the whole world.

We have been shocked and saddened to see the events that have been unfolding on the streets of Kyiv, Ukraine over the past few months.

This tragic loss of life and the inexcusable violence has no place in a free and democratic society.

The Catholic Church in Australia stands with all Ukrainians of good will in praying for a peaceful resolution to this conflict.

Over the last two months we have seen the vast numbers of Ukrainians gathered in the Majdan in Kyiv standing as faithful witnesses to faith, human dignity and the democratic process which are fundamental for a good and peaceful society.

The images of so many priests and religious ministering to their faithful on the squares and streets of Kyiv remind us of the Good Shepherd always tending the flock entrusted to his care.

The work of the Ukrainian Catholic Church as well as many other denominations has been vital in maintaining peace and strengthening the resolve of many to continue their protest peacefully despite the unprovoked attacks.

We pray for the Church in the Ukraine. We pray for Major Archbishop Sviatoslav, Bishops, Priests, Religious, and faithful as they continue to stand together, despite state-sanctioned threats of deregistration and punitive measures to punish the Church for fulfilling her mission to the people entrusted to her care.

We are edified by your example in following the words of Pope Francis who recently said that “pastors need to be with people, because a pastor should have the smell of his sheep.”

We must also pray that the civil authorities in Ukraine open their hearts and minds to the Gospel of Love and realise that the expression of free speech and religious liberty is a fundamental right of every human being.

The Ukrainian people and Church have suffered immense persecution and oppression throughout the twentieth century, yet their faith and love for their country have never been crushed.

May our prayers and the prayers of all Catholics in Australia, strengthen your brothers and sisters standing in the Majdan and protect them from all harm.

May the souls of the fallen find rest in the peace of Christ. May the Most Holy Mother of God Protector of Ukraine and All the Saints of Ukraine intercede before Christ and hear our prayer for peace.

+ Denis J. Hart

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